SCHOOL ON A BOSTON ROOF

EXPERIMENT WITH TUBERCULAR CHILDREN.

All Winter Long They Studied, Played and Slept in the Open Air—Some Cured, All Pronounced Better—Camp Life Is Provided for Them in Summer.

BOSTON, May 29.—Since the middle of January Miss Helen M. Mead of the Boston public schools has been teaching a class of tubercular children on the roof of a big brick building in Franklin Park, where the winds have a fair sweep, and she declares that if the school authorities ever again try to make her teach indoors she will resign her place.

Miss Mead used to teach indoors, but she astonished the janitor of her school by having the heat turned off in her room in midwinter. She made her pupils wear all the wraps they possessed and accustomed them to sitting with the windows open. She and they were the better for this regimen, and it naturally happened that when the Boston association that is fighting tuberculosis wanted somebody to teach a class of children in the open air Miss Mead was pitched upon for the work.

The name of that organization, to be out with the whole truth, is nothing less than the Boston Association for the Relief and Control of Tuberculosis. It established last fall at Parker Hill in Roxbury what it called a School of Outdoor Life for Tuberculous Children. This was done because an examination had shown that there were 100 or more cases of incipient tuberculosis among public school children.

Now tuberculosis is not very common among children, for the disease finds its favorite ground among young people late in their teens and among ill housed and ill nourished adults. All the same the presence of even a few tubercular children in the crowded public schools of Boston was deemed a menace to their schoolmates, so the School of Outdoor Life was started for the double purpose of arresting the disease in those already affected and preventing the spread of it to other children.

At first the sick children were placed in camp at Parker Hill about the middle of July, and the camp was not even called a school. There was no physician in attendance, but Dr. Thomas V. Toohey placed himself on call.

All summer long the children lived in the open and did a little gardening and nature study. As they grew stronger they gradually dropped the listless air with which they had come to camp and took to climbing trees and playing active games. One fellow who said he had never seen a tree plucked up courage to ask if he might climb one, and the others, being in the stage of our arboreal ancestors, took to climbing also, which was accepted as a wholesome atavistic manifestation.

There were tents at the camp and an open sided kitchen where wholesome things were cooked for the youngsters, and before the summer ended the kitchen was pretty busy, for those children developed the normal appetites of their age. There was a large tent for a dining room and a shelter in case of storms, but mostly the children played about under the trees of an old orchard which covered part of the ground.

Fourteen separate gardens, four feet by seven, were laid out, and two children were set to dress each garden. In the middle of the plot was a common garden at which all worked.

By the middle of August the gardens were yielding lettuce and radishes, and a little later came cauliflower, cabbage, peppers, tomatoes and celery. There were enough of these vegetables for the camp supply and for some of the children to take home. The gardens yielded even a fair crop of celery.

At the end of eight weeks the children had gained from two to ten pounds each, and at the end of fifteen weeks the examining physician decided that nine of the thirty-two children admitted might be discharged because the incipient disease had been arrested. All meanwhile had acquired cheerfulness and normal childish activity. They had also learned the art of mutual helpfulness.

The whole thing had been accomplished at an average cost of less than 28 cents a day for each child for food and at a cost of 85½ cents each for administration and training.

CAPPED, COATED AND BAGGED.

It was late in October when the camp took on the full character of an outdoor school. From that time until the middle of January the school was conducted in an unheated tent. Then the removal was made to Franklin Park.

Some years ago Boston in one of those moments when it imagines itself a potentially gay town built at a cost of $200,000, it is said, a huge yellow brick structure of pleasing architecture on a lovely bit of rising ground just within Franklin Park. This was to be a restaurant whither throngs of driving, riding and motoring folk might come to eat, drink and make merry. A great semicircular shed of stone was built to house the horses and vehicles of visitors and the ground about the big brick building was terraced and beautifully planted.

Boston, however, is not really gay, and the place had a fashion of being empty and gloomy, so that the plan of keeping a restaurant was given up and the so-called refectory became a branch of the public library. There was plenty of room to spare here and the open air school was welcomed to the place.

On the roof was set up a sort of pavilion with canvas sides, and a big indoor apartment was given over to the school. Miss Mead has not had her pupils indoors a single day the whole winter, and even the accustomed severity of the season that Boston calls spring has not been able to drive the school to cover.

A visitor to the school on the roof the other day found twenty-two youngsters at work in the pavilion on the roof with the canvas curtains all up on the sunny side, although the wind was keen and the sun shone rather dimly and fitfully. There have been fifty pupils in the school altogether, but almost thirty have been discharged as having in large measure got rid of their tubercular symptoms.

Only the professional eye could detect the slightest sign of invalidism in any of those that remain, and some of them have the appearance of rugged health and unusual vigor. Miss Mead says that the improvement has been not only physical but mental as well. She smiles at the notion that there can be any danger to herself in teaching such children.

It is her deliberate opinion that the ordinary public school is a much more dangerous place from a sanitary point of view than her pleasant place on the roof overlooking a noble landscape and as fresh as unlimited open air can make it. The sanitary arrangements and regulations also contribute to the safety of the open air school. Why, no fellow can so much as sneeze without having some other fellow's accusing finger pointed at him, and graver offences against good sanitation are never known.

The pupils of the open air school reach the place from their homes early in the morning after a light breakfast. As soon as they arrive the real breakfast is served, a simple, wholesome, sufficient meal, freshly prepared in the school kitchen.

After breakfast part of the children help about the kitchen and dining room while the rest go to their studies. Books, physical exercise (part of which is the art of deep breathing) and rest occupy the morning. Dinner comes at noon, a good hot meal served in a sunny room hung with pictures of child life.

Then after dinner comes a long nap on folding chairs in the open air. The funny thing about it is that everybody sleeps at this time and most sleep sound and long. There is a special mark for sleeping; it counts like a good recitation.

After a rather short afternoon session followed by a period of play the children have at 4 o'clock a good light supper and at half past 4 they go home.

All winter long the children sat in the unheated tent on the big bare roof clad in blanketed bags that extended from chest to toes and with thick overcoats that came almost to their knees. A good deal of this harness is still worn on most days of the malignant Boston spring.

There is a regular drill for getting in and out of togs, and the children do it with astonishing speed when one remembers how young folk in most homes dawdle over their dressing. Snap hooks and other time saving devices expedite the shifting of heavy outer garments.

The children go out in almost all weathers and skip across the broad area of the roof without regard to rain or snow. They have simple lessons in the growth and forms of plants and trees right out in the park, and some part of every day is given to this work.

There is nothing funnier than the indifference of these supposedly semi-invalid children to weather conditions when it is recalled that the ordinary public schools of Boston close on every stormy day and on some days when the storm seems to most adults of outdoor habit to be nothing worse than a refreshing drizzle.

A sure enough new thought person would criticise the open air school because of the emphasis it seems to lay upon symptoms and sanitary detail. Every pupil is card catalogued, and upon each card is a short life history of the child and his parents. Besides this card catalogue record, which is filed away out of sight, each child has his own daily record in which are set down a good many things that most people do not trouble to record.

Here appears the hour of going to bed and of arising, a note as to whether the child has slept well or ill, whether he bathed, brushed his teeth and the like, together with the daily record of weight, length of noonday nap and other physcial details. Right in the open air schoolroom is a pair of scales where the children may weigh themselves at any time, and every one can tell you at once how much he has gained in weight since entering school.

Contrary to all that some folks would expect, the children are really not oversolicitous as to symptoms, and in spite of the daily weighing they do gain flesh. They learn also a great deal about the care of hands, teeth, hair and the person generally and they are scrupulous to use only their individual toilet implements, chairs, books, clothing.

It is a striking commentary upon the strongly marked social lines of Boston that only one child of native American parents has come to the school. As to race they are about equally divided between Irish and Hebrews. Most of them are children of parents who are hardly able to afford the food and treatment deemed necessary for the arrest of the disease in its incipient stages, but all pay something, and the school does not provide carfares.

When the city of Boston takes the whole responsibility of the work and extends it so that all tubercular children of the public schools shall have the opportunity of attending an open air school of this kind private means will probably be found to supply food at the school for those who are unable to pay for it. If the experience of this school is to be trusted the probability is that few children will need the regimen of the open air more than a year.

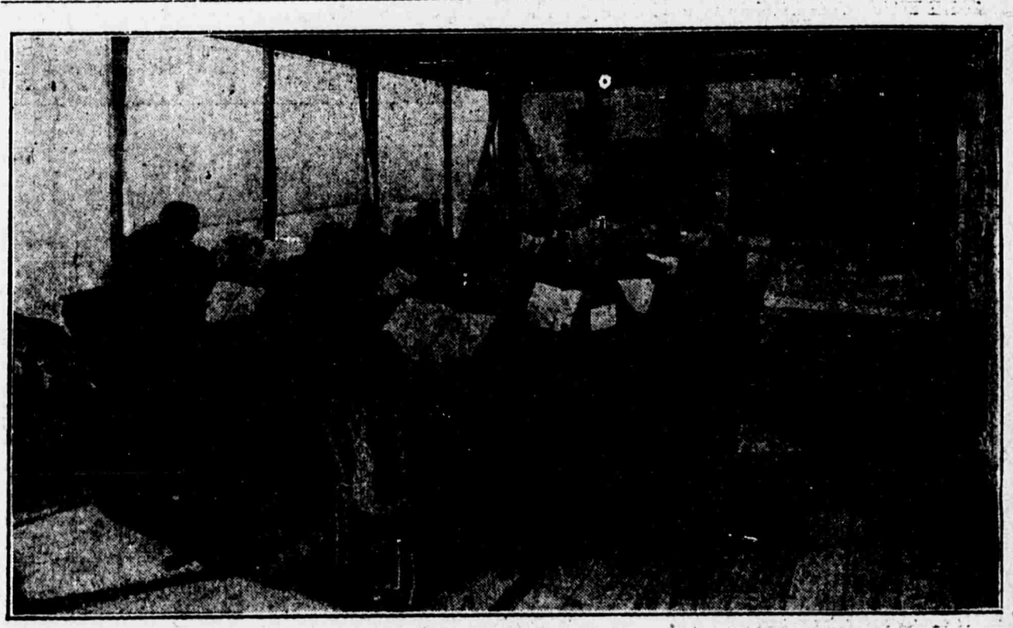
Miss Mead thinks it will be hard to find teachers willing to take such schools, but she expects that all the public schools will eventually provide special rooms for children temporarily unfit because of physical conditions to go on with the regular work of their classes. Some new schoolhouses are to have what will be in effect open air rooms.

It is expected that the sanitary lessons taught at the open air school, and especially that as to the importance of ventilation in living and sleeping rooms, will do much in future years for the pupils Miss Mead is so much interested in the work that she will go to Europe this summer for the purpose of studying the practical application of the open air idea in several foreign cities.

Toward the end of June the open air school will close, and such of the pupils as still need special open air treatment, together with others in like need, will camp on twenty acres of land in the suburbs. This little settlement will be administered by the useful society of portentous name.

Gardening, nature study, special exercises and spontaneous natural play will keep the children wholesomely busy until the public schools reopen, and then many of them will go back into the regular school system, while those who need further special care will again attend the open air school.

CLASS AT WORK IN THE OPEN AIR SCHOOL.



READY FOR THE NAP.

BY WATER TO THE OLD SOUTH

A LEISURELY TRIP TO WASHINGTON'S BOYHOOD HOME.

Voyage by Steamboat to Fredericksburg—Glimpses of Historic Spots in the Heart of the Old Dominion—Simple House Where Mary Washington Lived.

If you are in a hurry to reach Fredericksburg, Va., you may make the journey in about two hours by rail from Washington. If you have no such pressing haste you may make the journey from Baltimore by way of the Chesapeake and the Rappahannock in about a day and two nights. One night takes the voyager down the bay to the mouth of the Rappahannock, and the rest of the voyage of about 150 miles is made on the river and its tributaries.

Nobody has ever fully explained why a voyage upon the waters south of Mason and Dixon's line usually seems to be conducted solely for the comfort and pleasure of the passengers. The trick of conveying this impression is the secret of those wily Marylanders and Virginians, and they work it on the stranger from the North without explanation.

It has been laboriously set forth by a puzzled cynic that Southerners, whether urban or rural, are amiably hospitable and courteous to strangers because the whole South is provincial; it has no really great cities, and the people have the instincts and manners of well brought up villagers. Such an explanation, however, hardly fits the case of men who go over, the same steamboat route three times a week the year around and meet in the course of their duty some thousands of travellers every year of their lives.

In the nature of things such men ought to harden into a keen official manner with an unmistakable business edge, but they don't. On the contrary they keep right on year after year taking it for granted that their relations to the travelling public are not those of a common carrier to the world at large, but of host to guest.

Chesapeake Bay opposite the mouth of the Rappahannock looks like the ocean and the river itself like a great arm of the sea. When the steamer is touching at a wharf on one side of the stream you see the opposite bank as a mere hazy blur of green.

Just a few miles inside the mouth of the Rappahannock the vessel suddenly turns tail to the main stream and loses herself in a tributary of fascinating charm, Carter's Creek, named for that "King" Carter of Currotoman who with his two wives lies buried in the graveyard of ruined old Christ Church near the little port of Irvington. Carter was the friend of that other great land owner Lord Fairfax, and the two had remote country seats in the wilds of Clark county, a region that the stripling George Washington surveyed for Fairfax between 1748 and 1750. The high backed, luxurious Carter pew is still preserved in Christ Church.

After the excursion into Carter's Creek the vessel takes an even deeper plunge into the northern neck by way of Currotoman River, with its three or four little ports and its sealike mouth. Even yet the main river is three or four miles wide, and the time of the steamer from wharf to wharf as she weaves back and forth across the salt and ruffled stream is often a matter of forty-five minutes.

On either hand are the old historic counties of Virginia, those of the northern neck, between the Rappahannock and its near and great neighbor the Potomac, Lancaster, Richmond, Westmoreland, King George, Stafford, those of the south bank, Middlesex, Essex, Caroline, Spottsylvania. Washington and the Lees were of Westmoreland. Madison was born not far from little Port Conway in King George, and it was here that the fleeing Booth crossed the river to his last stand in Garrett's barn.

Between the mouth of the river and Fredericksburg are thirty stopping places, some of them locally famous for the things of to-day, as Merry Point, noted for soft shell crabs, and Monaskin for garden seeds. At Bowler's, perhaps forty miles from the mouth of the stream, the floods from the uplands bring down so much fresh water that profitable oyster culture ceases and the stakes which mark the boundaries of private oyster beds all the way up the river to that point give way to the picturesque pound nets with their approaches hundreds of yards in length and their pounds alive with miscellaneous catches.

There are occasional long stretches of monotony in the middle course of the voyage, but beauty and variety as the stream narrows. From the bluffs huge chutes carry down freight to the wharves. There is a horseshoe loop of noble aspect, and at one point the wooded banks draw so close together that the vessel steams on as through a green cañon.

The traveller hears of noble old Virginia estates ashore. There is Mount Airy of the Taylor family, in their possession since the middle of the seventeenth century and graced with a mansion dating from 1758. Another is Blandfield of the Beverlys, an estate of 4,000 acres, with a manor house a century and a half old. The present owner, Robert Beverly, places the Roman numerals VI. after his name. Blandfield's central hall, from which a double stairway ascends, is 70 feet long by 30 wide and the house has twenty-four rooms. Of its famous old library only 500 volumes remain.

In due season the steamer blows for the wharf at the little red city of Fredericksburg, the head of navigation. Beyond the town a dam 900 feet long and 18 feet high closes the river and lends power to the factories that are now the life blood of the place. From the deck of the incoming vessel you see the heights where Burnside left his thousands of dead and wounded on "loud Sabbath," now nearly fifty years ago, while just across the stream are the historic meadows where George Washington played.

Fredericksburg, with an odd taste for a town of doubly historic interest, has substituted numbers for the noble old English names long borne by some of the principal streets, but even commercial ambition of an active community now grown to about 7,000 inhabitants cannot rob the place of its interest. Mary Washington, the mother of George, has a monument here, and her simple little house remains, as well as the more pretentious mansion of her daughter, Mrs. Fielding Lewis.

Sunrise Tavern is shown as the place where Washington and Lafayette used occasionally to meet. Nothing remains of the simple farmhouse in which George Washington passed part of his boyhood, except perhaps some bricks of the chimney, but a quaint little cottage is pointed out as standing on the site. This spot is across the river in Stafford county. It has nothing to redeem it from the commonplace except its associations and the luxurious green of its grass, shrubs and noble old trees.

A wholesome thing to dissipate the popular notion that the Washingtons of George's childhood were persons of vast wealth and showy habits is a visit to Fredericksburg and a glimpse of Mary Washington's simple house. Mount Vernon of Washington's youth was not a great house, just as the early homestead of the Lees in Westmoreland is a simple place compared with their later mansion of Arlington.

The Virginians like to point out across the river the old homestead of Chatham, which Burnside occupied as his headquarters and which Lee is said romantically to have refused to bombard because "beneath those trees" he had courted the lady who became his wife. Exactly the opposite kind of story is told of Nelson, who commanded the Virginia line at the siege of Yorktown in 1781. Nelson offered a guinea to every gunner who should hit his own house, then occupied by Cornwallis.

The Nelson house still stands outwardly intact, though it was occupied as a military hospital in the second siege of Yorktown, eighty years later than that which closed with the surrender of the British. The dead of both armies that lie in the great cemeteries at Fredericksburg far outnumber the living residents of the town, for the National Cemetery alone has more than 15,000 graves.

Fredericksburg, which comes so near to being a mountain town that the harnessed waters of the Rappahannock here turn the wheels of a score of factories, not only has tidewater at its wharves but is within easy reach of three navigable rivers. Only a few miles across the "Neck" is the Potomac, while Richmond and the James are scarcely two hours away by rail, and a short further railway journey brings you to West Point, the head of navigation on the York.

Baltimore may be reached then on the return journey by way of the Rappahannock, Washington and the Potomac, which means two hours by rail and two nights and a day by water, or by way of Richmond and the James or Richmond and the York. A single night accomplishes the voyage from the head of navigation on the York, and if the night is moonlit the hours in river and bay are enchanting.

By way of the James to Norfolk and thence up the Chesapeake to Baltimore is a voyage of 300 miles, and full of wonderful variety and interest, for the river shows you the very heart of the Old Dominion, and the steamer weaves back and forth across the stream in eleven daylight hours until the traveller wonders whether the landings, set down on the time table as twenty-five, will not turn out to be twice as many.

HOUSE AT FREDERICKSBURG OF MARY BALL WASHINGTON MOTHER OF GEORGE WASHINGTON.

SUNRISE TAVERN WHERE WASHINGTON AND LAFAYETTE WERE GUESTS.

THINGS FOR CHRISTMAS.

Importers Now Ready With Samples for the Holiday Trade.

Of course in all sorts of businesses preparations have to be made in advance. Clothing for winter wear is made up in summer, summer clothing is made in winter. In many lines the planning is done a year ahead, as it is, for example, in looking after the supply of goods required for the Christmas trade.

No sooner are the holidays over than buyers go abroad to hunt up novelties in Europe and to put into the way of realization ideas that they take with them, all designed for the trade of the next Christmas holidays. It takes time to make the goods, time to import them and time to distribute them and get them ready finally for sale. Jobbers here begin to put in their orders for Christmas goods six or eight months ahead, in the spring.

Such has long been the custom in preparing for the holiday trade, a custom brought to mind just now when most people are thinking only of going away for the summer, by a sign in a window of a downtown importer: "Christmas samples ready for inspection."